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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11
TRSE-00 HA-05 AID-05 /075 W
----------041268 081311Z /75
R 080842Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9200
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 2875

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, BG
SUBJ: OSMANI REMAINS IN CONTEST; ATAUR RAHMAN KHAN FORMS FRONT;
ONE CANDIDATE'S PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION RESTORED

REF: DACCA 2764

1. THE DEADLINE FOR WITHDRAWAL OF CANDIDATURE FROM THE PRESI-
DENTIAL ELECTION PASSED YESTERDAY (MAY 7) WITH NO CANDIDATE
WITHDRAWING FROM THE CAMPAIGN. GENERAL OSMANI, THE CANDIDATE
OF THE GONOTANTRIK OIKYA JOTA (GOJ), APPEARED WITH VIRTUALLY ALL OF
HIS AWAMI LEAGUE SUPPORTERS AT A LARGE RALLY IN DACCA YESTERDAY
AFTERNOON AND GAVE A GENERAL RUNDOWN OF HIS CAMPAIGN GOALS, WHICH HE
SAID WERE "TO RETRIEVE THE PEOPLE'S RIGHTS AND GIVE THEM
BACK TO THE PEOPLE" BY MEANS OF A SOVEREIGN PARLIAMENT.
OSMANI MADE NO DIRECT REFERENCE TO HIS SEVEN CONDITIONS
FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE CAMPAIGN, BUT
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AWAMI LEAGUE PRESIDENT ABDUL MALICK UKIL, THE SECOND
SPEAKER AT THE RALLY, SAID THAT "THE PEOPLE" HAD EXPECTED THE
GOVERNMENT TO MEET "AT LEAST SOME OF OUR SEVEN CONDITIONS."
THE PEOPLE, HE SAID, WERE DISAPPOINTED THAT THE ELECTION
ATMOSPHERE WOULD NOT BE FREE, THAT IS, WITH CONTINUED
EXISTANCE OF MARTIAL LAW AND ABSENCE OF PRESS FREEDOM, BUT
"EVEN THEN, WE WOULD NOT LET ANYBODY GO UNCHALLENGED IN

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THIS ELECTION".

2. LATER IN THE EVENING YESTERDAY, PRESIDENT ZIA AT A
PRESS CONFERENCE ANSWERED REPORTERS' QUESTIONS ABOUT OSMANI'S
SEVEN CONDITIONS. IN HIS USUAL LACONIC STYLE, ZIA TICKED OFF
THE VARIOUS POINTS AND REPLIED THAT THERE WOULD BE A VACCUM
IN THE COUNTRY IF HE RESIGNED AS CMLA. HE SAID THE
ELECTION DATE WAS NOT THAT SUDDEN; PRESS SPECULATION HAD BEEN
GOING ON FOR "QUITE SOME TIME". HE SAID THE POLITICAL
PARTIES REGULATION WOULD BE WITHDRAWN IN PHASES AND THAT THE
DEMAND FOR PRESS FREEDOM OUGHT NOT TO COME FROM THOSE WHO
HAD PREVIOUSLY CLOSED MOST OF THE PAPERS IN THE COUNTRY.
ZIA ALSO SAID HE HAD RELEASED THOUSANDS OF POLITICAL
PRISONERS IN THE LAST TWO YEARS AND THE FEW REMAINING WOULD BE
RELEASED. ZIA SAID THAT AN ORDINANCE HAD BEEN ISSUED
MAKING THE PRESIDENT THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.
(THE ORDER WAS NOT PUBLICIZED, BUT WE UNDERSTAND
IT WAS PRINTED APRIL 29 IN THE GAZETTE. DATT
SENDING ADDITIONAL INFO SEPTEL.) THROUGHOUT HIS PRESS
CONFERENCE, ZIA'S TONE WAS THAT THE AWAMI LEAGUERS, "THE
BAKSALITES" AS THEY ARE BEING LABELED, HAD NO RIGHT TO
MAKE DEMANDS AFTER THE TROUBLE THEY HAD CAUSED PREVIOUSLY
FOR THE COUNTRY.

3. OSMANI AND HIS SUPPORTERS SEEM TO HAVE ENCOURAGED THEIR
IDENTIFICATION WITH SHEIKH MUJIB AND HIS FORMER
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BAKSAL REGIME. BEFORE ADDRESSING THE DACCA MEETING, THE
ENTIRE ENTOURAGE OF AWAMI LEAGUE SUPPORTERS, INCLUDING KAMAL
HOSSAIN, JUMIB'S FOREIGN MINISTER, TREKKED TO MUJIB'S GRAVE
AT TUNGIPARA IN FARIDPUR DISTRICT TO START THEIR CAMPAIGN. THE EARLIE
R
FACTIONAL DISPUTE OVER THE LEGACY OF THE SHEIKH SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN
RESOLVED IN HIS FAVOR, AS ALL OF THE MODERATES ALSO MADE
THE JOURNEY TO TUNGIPARA AND VIGOROUSLY PARTICIPATED IN THE
PUBLIC MEETINGS.

4. ATAU RAHMAN KHAN, EVEN THOUGH SITTING OUT THE ELECTION,
HAS FINALLY ESTABLISHED A POLITICAL FRONT OF HIS OWN. CALLED
THE NATIONAL UNITED FRONT, THE COALITION CONSISTS OF ATA'S
JATIYA LEAGUE, MOULANA SIDDIQUI AHMED'S ISLAMIC DEMOCRATIC
LEAGUE, PIR MOHSENUDDIN AND MOINUL HUSAIN OF THE BANNED
DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE (PART OF WHICH IS SUPPORTING ZIA),
MRS. AMENA BEGUM OF THE JATIYA DAL, A.S.M. SOLAIMAN OF THE
KRISHAK-SRAMIK PARTY (PEASANTS-WORKERS PARTY) AND
SHAMSUL HUDA OF A RUMP OF THE CONVENTION MUSLIM LEAGUE,
THE MAJOR PORTION OF WHICH HAS MERGED WITH THE MAINSTREAM
MUSLIM LEAGUE. THE FRONT, ANNOUNCED MAY 6, IS PLEDGED TO
RESTORE PARLIAMENT AND BELIEVES THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

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TO BE "SHORTSIGHTED." ATA'S "SIT IT OUT" STANCE WILL
APPARENTLY BE SUPPORTED BY MOINUL HUSAIN'S WEEKLY
THE NEW NATION AND BY ITTEFAQ, THE LARGEST DAILY, OPERATED BY
MOINUL HOSAIN AND HIS BROTHER, MANJU.

5. MEANWHILE, THE ELECTION COMMISSION MAY 5 RESTORED GOLAM
MURSHED AS A PRESDIENTIAL CANDIDATE. HIS NOMINATION HAD
BEEN REJECTED MAY 3 WHEN HE FAILED TO APPEAR BEFORE THE
ELECTION COMMISSION. THE COMMISSION GAVE NO RXPLANATION
FOR ACCEPTING HIS APPEAL. THERE ARE NOW TEN CANDIDATES
FOR THE JUNE 3 ELECTION.
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